

Hello Damage Tokyo Tour Guide : the ultimate guide to underground Tokyo



UPDATE!!!

*If you want to contact **schultzzz** the man himself and ask him for information, anecdotes, anything really about Tokyo Tour Guide, the places and people, and Japanese language and culture, you can now do it! Just drop an email to this address, I swear you won't regret it:*
kouenjiburnout@gmail.com

SECOND UPDATE!!!

*The **Tokyo Damage Tour Guide** (updated until 2013) is now available for http://www.epx.it/spettro/Tokyo_Damage_Report_Guide-2013version.pdf **free download in pdf format here** http://www.epx.it/spettro/Tokyo_Damage_Report_Guide-2013version.pdf!*

THIRD UPDATE!!!

The original website Hello Damage is now fully back online at this address <https://www.hellodamage.net/> (<https://www.hellodamage.net/>)

FOURTH UPDATE!!!

New interview (<https://www.ikigairoom.it/intervista-a-schultzzz-di-hello-damage-tokyo-tour-guide/>) published with Schultzzz himself (English text below)!

My first trip to Japan was in 2006. I was 20 years old, I studied with great enthusiasm and very little discipline the Japanese language at university, I fed on **japanoise (Boredoms, Merzbow, Hair Stylistics, Keiji Haino...)** and attended the underground film screenings curated by (<http://www.asianfeast.org/>) Asian Feast (<http://www.asianfeast.org/>) at now gone **XM24** squat in Bologna and **Nuovo Cinema Inferno** at **Link** (also gone...), where I saw for the first time the various **Ringu, All Night Long, Guinea Pig, Tsukamoto Shinya's** films and others.

I didn't know anyone who had ever gone to Japan. Just some friends of an uncle, some doctors who had been there maybe in the 80s for a conference and from whom I had heard that it was the most expensive place in the world and had paid for grapes per single grape. And that was it.

It was February or March I think, it was cold (not enough to prevent me from going all the way to Hokkaido and seeing the Snow Festival by sheer chance), my parents gave me this opportunity for which I will be forever grateful.

I packed and went away for a month armed with a **Japan Rail Pass** without any precise plan other than to travel as much as possible and spend almost nothing. I had read (<https://www.willferguson.ca/>) Will Ferguson (<https://www.willferguson.ca/>)'s unforgettable "[Hitching Rides with Buddha](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/48950/hitching-rides-with-buddha-by-will-ferguson/9780676976991/) (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/48950/hitching-rides-with-buddha-by-will-ferguson/9780676976991/>)" (also known as "**Hokkaido Highway Blues**") and his (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/37480.The_Hitchhiker_s_Guide_to_Japan) previous meticulous hitchhiker's guidebook (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/37480.The_Hitchhiker_s_Guide_to_Japan) in which he described in detail where to stop and take rides, gas stations, the busiest motorway junctions of the rising sun to travel free

without a yen in your pocket. In the end I didn't even try to hitchhike, I never really had the balls, although Japan is definitely the safest place to do it (for a man, for women it surely is a different story).

However, it wasn't the **53 stations of Tokaido** that motivated me, nor to retrace the pilgrimage of the 88 temples of Shikoku, but rather the megalopolis par excellence, **Tokyo**, the one I had mostly dreamed of through films and anime like **Tokyo Fist**, **Akira**, **Tokyo Rampage** (also known as "**Pornstar**"), Megalopolis, Wicked City, a dystopian version of it filtered through 80s anime and cyberpunk movies, made of cement, glass, iron, bodily fluids, sweaty, oppressive and dehumanizing, yet alive and pulsating, desperately vital, on the verge of collapse, of a nuclear or *kaiju* induced catastrophe or imminent seismic disaster, but bleeding and screaming and bursting, destroying everything, inevitable and primeval. The new *Ballardian* flesh, the iron man of Tetsuo in short.

TOKYO FIST New UK Trailer (Shinya Tsuk...



The landscapes I was looking for were those immortalized by **Araki Nobuyoshi**, **Romain Slocombe**, **Moriyama Daido**, a black and white oozing neon, the nocturnal **Shinjuku**, the decadent sleaze of **fuzoku**, or better the **ukiyo** itself, **Kabukicho**, where any desire could be satisfied, where imagination was finally in power, **Terayama Shuji's angura bunka** (the underground dark culture), where avant-garde sexuality politics and death were one. The darkest and dampest underground, that of **Wakamatsu Koji's** experimental erotic and subversive films, Masami Akita's harsh noise audiocassettes, **Yamataka Eye's Hanatarash** concerts breaking through the walls of a club literally entering with a bulldozer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJUbd66Vcc>) and cutting himself with a chainsaw. I wanted to see the punks (**The Stalin**) of **Burst City** in **Sogo Ishii**, or the biker rockers of **Wild Zero**, drinking with romantic yakuza like **Joe Shishido**, fantasizing about taking risks in the least risky country in the world.



Flyers from Nuovo Cinema Inferno and Asian Feast underground cinema screenings in now defunct Link and XM24 squats in Bologna

Turns out I arrived at least 15 years late. Yet something, indeed everything, was still moving, but without knowing anyone, nor even speaking enough Japanese, this underworld would remain such, and inaccessible to the uninitiated, especially if **gaijin** (foreigners).

I can't remember how I found it, yet I came across this strange online guide, (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180727095726/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/>) Tokyo Damage Report (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180727095726/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/>), written someone named "**schultzzz**" (of course my thoughts immediately jumped to William S. Burroughs' Dutch Schultz, fuelling my excitement), which described a completely different Tokyo from my Lonely Planet: a dirty, sweaty, perpetually drunk Tokyo, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, convulsing, sexually psychotic, high on *shabu* (methamphetamine), restless, and in short, that same Tokyo that I dreamed of and yet it looked like a relic of films from 20 years before or of the already rare first Italian translations of **Murakami Ryu**'s books (and yet the Espresso magazine did distribute the **Tokyo Decadence** videotape).

It was probably the search for noise concerts in Tokyo that brought me to this strange guide, and now that I think about it maybe I was by looking for information about the 20000v live club (<https://www.tokyogigguide.com/en/gigs/venue/149-20000volt>) in **Koenji** (now in another location but still in Koenji) that somewhere I had read was opened by **John Zorn** the man himself in the 80's (I can't find any sources, who knows if it's true or not), his best artistic time, the one of jazz core with **Naked City**. Or maybe I was looking for information about **Design Festa**, the gallery in **Harajuku** and the annual festival of independent artists we have already talked about in this article (<https://www.ikigairoom.it/design-festa-il-piu-grande-festival-darte-asiatico-festeggia-i-25-anni-di-vita/>), which I had inexplicably seen an advertising poster for in a youth hostel Helsinki, Finland, in 2002 and which had fascinated me ever since.



Design Festa Harajuku gallery and festival flyer found in 2003 in some youth hostel in Helsinki, Finland

Tokyo Damage Report (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170915184127/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/tokyo-tour-guide>) offered exactly that: very detailed information about **live houses** dedicated to **noise** (**Shinjuku Urga**, deceased), grind core, visual key; **mini bars** run by former alcoholic revolutionaries or 60's *tokusatsu* themed; **used panties shops** (**burusera**); hardcore or Italian prog **record shops**; **avant-garde bookstores** with books on how to become a pimp in Japan and coffee table books on car accidents (**Animal アニマル**, should still be there, in Koenji); boutiques dedicated to women's wrestling **fetishism** or catfighting; where to find vintage analog synths; the **yankee rockabilly shopping malls** I saw in **Tokyo Ga** by Wim Wenders; artisans specializing in Japanese **rope for kimbaku**

bondage; ero-guru art galleries and so much more.

Anyone who has ever been to Japan knows very well how difficult it can be to find any place, often even taxi drivers with their elegant white gloves and frequent side road naps are forced to get off and ask for information in the **kobans** (small capillary police stations) that will pull out a huge map and they will do their best to help you, and most of the time restaurants and shops have a small map on their business cards, and I'm talking about 2006, well before Google Maps. Just figuring out which subway exit to take can be a challenge (not to mention Shinjuku station, just read here, <https://www.therisingwasabi.com/man-still-searching-for-shinjuku-station-exit-27k-dies/> , but don't take it too seriously, Rising Wasabi is The Onion of gaijin news), so having an address like 東京都千代田区平河町1-3-13 菱進平河町ビル 1 階 (in this case the late bookstore Boujinsha, which at the time only sold books for Japanese language study) is practically useless.

Therefore, **Tokyo Damage Tour Guide** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170915184127/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/tokyo-tour-guide> (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170915184127/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/tokyo-tour-guide>)) was, indeed it still is extraordinary precisely because it provided very detailed information on how to reach the desired destination, tracing routes made of numbers of steps, signs with which to orient oneself, instructions to follow carefully, entering for most of the times into narrow alleys, climbing several floors of completely anonymous buildings, ringing at one door just like any another, and then finding yourself, for example, in the legendary noise only record shop **NEDS** (<http://neds-records.com/shop.html>) in **Daikan Plaza**, on the seventh floor of a sleazy office building that hides inside dozens of semi-legal shops dedicated to various fetishes and at the time also the headquarters of an association for the diffusion of the failed utopia Esperanto language... Finding all of these places would have been absolutely impossible at the time, and even now without a proper guide. The Japanese themselves are mostly unaware of this, and this dark side of the **Wa** is not always welcome, in the same way that few people talk about prostitution, exploitation, open-air brothels under the eyes of everyone in **Kabukicho** or in any red light district next to a station.



*NEDS noise music shop inside Daikanyama Plaza,
Shinjuku, Tokyo*

Japan is not only Zen gardens, Sanrio, sushi, diligence and extreme rigor, **kawaii** and Ghibli. Tokyo, with its human density, the perennial lack of sleep, the stress, the personal

failures of the many who migrate from the countryside to find fortune and often remain suffocated in an immense and ruthless megalopolis, is an environment, a habitat of its own, where life, sex, death, money, art and suffering generate vertigo.



*What Hello Damage Tokyo
Tour Guide categories look
like*

Tokyo Guide is divided by districts (there are 47 in Tokyo), focusing on the largest and densest anthropological material such as **SHINJUKU** (the real center of Tokyo, if only it had one, and home of the largest subway station in the world, just check out this [Rising Wasabi's satirical article, it's like The Onion but about life in Japan \(https://www.therisingwasabi.com/man-still-searching-for-shinjuku-station-exit-27k-dies/\)](https://www.therisingwasabi.com/man-still-searching-for-shinjuku-station-exit-27k-dies/)), **KABUKICHO** (red light district par excellence, where you can find prostitutes of any kind, yakuza, a batting cage open 24/7 and much more), **OOKUBO** (Korean district), **WASEDA** (university district famous for ramen street), **KOUENJI** (more traditionally left-wing district, full of bars, live houses, galleries and independent bookshops), **IKEBUKURO** (business district but also famous for the Sunshine-dori shopping street), **NAKANO** (a bit more nerdy, home of the famous **Broadway Mall**), **AKIHABARA** (**Electric Town**, full of electronics shops but also home of otaku and hentai crap), **HARAJUKU** (where **Takeshita-dori** is located and cosplay culture was born, full of small boutiques, once the place to be for indie couture fashion, quirky extravagant outsider styles, now mostly big brands, pancakes and a ton of people), **SHIBUYA** (famous for the *hachiko* statue, perfect for clubbing and especially people watching, in addition to the famous **Shibuya scramble** intersection, once home to Japanese hip-hop culture), **UENO** (especially famous for its park), **SHIMOKITAZAWA** (famous for its live houses, cafes and second-hand clothes shops, a bit of Tokyo's hipster district, in a positive sense though), **KICHIJOUJI** (a small friendly and warm neighbourhood on the Chou line, famous for the Ghibli Museum, which at the time had not yet been opened), **MEGURO** (i.e., "black eye", don't miss the Parasite Museum), **JINBOUCHOU** (or **Book City**, literally an antiques bookshop after another but also hentai magazines, indecent photobooks of grown-past-their-prime-age adolescent idol, 80s catalogues and film posters) and **ASAKUSA** (traditional neighbourhood of Senso-ji temple and craftsmen), as well as some other curiosities (where to buy crazy souvenirs, themeparks, etc.).



FRUiTS magazine street fashions from Takeshita dori, Harajuku, in the late 90s/early 2000s

I printed the guide and during the week I spent in Tokyo I went around the neighbourhood looking for these otherwise inaccessible places of the mind, where it is often impossible to communicate in English (the guide even specifies whether the staff spoke any English or not) and sometimes the opening hours are absolutely arbitrary (**NEDS** for example seems to be now open only on Saturdays and Sundays from 19:30 to 21:30...). Starting from Shinjuku I remember visiting **Mosakusha**, an anarchist bookshop where I loaded myself with flyers that are still in Ikigai Room (<http://www.ikigairoom.it>), then **Maps'n'porn** where I found a caseless VHS of the infamous *All Night Long* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyziAMaeQtA>) (1992 the first of the series, by Matsumura Katsuya, then available only in very expensive Dutch editions, maybe Tokyo Shock), **バロク (Barok)** a small store focused on Filipino Faces of Death VHSs and Bum Fights DVDs; then **Gangsta Barber**, a **rap-themed barber shop** (black hiphop culture was very popular in Japan in the '90s and early '20s, as demonstrated by the book "*HipHop In Japan* (<https://www.amazon.com/Hip-Hop-Japan-Paths-Cultural-Globalization/dp/0822338920>)" by Ian Condry and the posthumous popularity of artists, only today defined lo-fi, like the legend **Nujabes**, or anime and manga like **Tokyo Tribes** and **Jet Set Radio** videogame on Dreamcast), then the **Disc Union** record chain, with each floor dedicated to a different genre, **Irregular Rhythm Asylum** (which we've already talked about here (<https://www.ikigairoom.it/tokyo-alternativa-irregular-rhythm-asylum/>)), to which our friend **schultzzz** directs us with the following set of instructions:

"this place is insanely hard to find. It's basically inside a shoebox hidden in a cupboard in a dungeon in the back of

the castle on the 9th level, and the Wizard served your ass with a Spell of Confusion. Plus, it's around 20 minutes on foot from Shinjuku station. (but if you're planning to visit the other anarchist bookstore, the maps-n-porn store, or the gay district of 2-chome ANYWAY, it's not such a long haul). Start from Shinjuku station. Walk east on Shinjuku Dori (walk on the left side of the street). Walk and walk and walk. You'll pass a TULLY'S coffee on the right. Maybe you'll pass 2. Eventually, you'll come to a traffic light. On the far side of the intersection is a big building with TOSHIN written in English. (it should be standing next to a building with YOZA YOZA YOZA!!! written in huge letters. This is the intersection for you. If you get to a HUGE intersection where the building on the far right corner has a sign reading ACHILLES on top of it, you've gone 2 blocks too far. Turn around. Anyway, you've found the "SHINJUKU DORI MEETS TOSHIN AND YOZA YOZA YOZA" intersection. Turn left, (north). You will enter a small maze of alleys. Walk for about 3 minutes until you come to an AM/PM store. Turn right and walk for about 20 feet, then take the first left into a little alley. The shop is on this very block! Walk about 20 feet. Pass the sign reading EARTHREE. The building AFTER EARTHREE is IRREGULAR RHYTHM ASYLUM. On your right. If you look up, you should see tiny, grey and black flags sticking out of a 3d floor window. That is the place! Go up the stairs and get off on the 3d floor. Pat yourself on the back for making it through the 9th level dungeon maze!".

Who is Nujabes?



This is the level of difficulty in finding so many of these places, which unfortunately sometimes remained only in my imagination, either because I couldn't get there, or maybe I arrived too late (Tokyo changes all the time, and some of these places have no real commercial reason to survive other than the obtuse determination or maybe madness of their own owners), or I simply didn't have the balls to go (for example **Guinea pig** ギニーピッグ in Kabukicho, described as "*piercing/body mod/gay bar*" populated by retired strippers, trench-coated exhibitionists, performance s/m and occasional orgies, not really my scene, and moreover, the very name of the place corresponds to the infamous series of snuff-like movies started in 1985 by the mangaka **Hideshi Hino** (now finally reprinted also in Italy after an unobtainable Telemaco edition of the '90s that I found at the historical **Mondo Bizarro** gallery in Via Alessandrini, Bologna), which was mistaken at the time for a real death movie by no other than Charlie Sheen himself who contacted the FBI. The makers of the movie had to release a making-of to show how elaborate yet fake the scenes and props were, and then went on to make several

spin-offs).

*Please do write to schultzzz to this email address
kouenjiburnout@gmail.com if you want to know a horrifying
story about the kind of video entertainment Guinea Pig bar
was providing to its patrons...*





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バロック Barok shop in Koenji and what remains from it online

Today everyone knows **Nakano Broadway Mall** (which we've talked about in detail in <https://www.ikigairoom.it/mostra-personale-di-ben-sanair/>) this article (<https://www.ikigairoom.it/mostra-personale-di-ben-sanair/>) but at the time Tokyo was not yet the destination of hundreds of thousands of Western otakus, and the mall offers stubbornly underground bookstores like <https://www.facebook.com/tacoché> Taco-che (<https://www.facebook.com/tacoché>), the **Mandarake** mecca, or **hentai subcultures** or **Ascii** retro-technology shelters, and was not yet marked on any Lonely Planet.

Travelling in the early 2000s was not an experience like any other today. It is useless fuel even further the nostalgia factor, there is already way much of it and most of it gone corporate, and especially in these times of Covid-19 when travelling is literally impossible and you don't know when or if you will be able to resume. In the last few years in Italy Japan has literally exploded, thanks to the excellent Beijing Express tv show, some bad books written by celebrities, questionable Youtubers, the pervasiveness of the geek and otaku culture that made reading manga and watching anime definitely mainstream, the now tragic Terrace House reality show, sushi and now the ramen mania, so in short, travelling in Japan is now an experience like any other. The same photo spots will be reproduced countless times on Instagram, the same filters, the same poses, the same commodification. At the time it wasn't like this though, and I had already arrived late, and it's such a shame that I have so very few pictures of that trip, as I didn't have a smartphone or a digital camera with me but only a disposable one with which I took some faded and shy images of that 2006 trip.



Otaru, maybe, in 2006



The pachinko parlours that mesmerized Wim Wenders in Tokyo-Ga

There were also no social networks to share your experiences on, and I remember keeping my friends up to date by emailing them at night at some **manga café** where I spent the night to save money on hotels. In an email I was describing to a friend who **hosts** were, let's say the male entertainers, whom I had first met in Kabukicho red light district, and I couldn't come up with any other image better

than Japanese Rod Stewarts, with swollen hair, pointy shoes, very long Renaissance-easque sleeves (much like Seinfeld's puffy shirt), leather jackets and thick makeup, cigarette dangling from their lips and long painted nails, while they were pestering girls around the district or at Hachiko square, probably themselves *kyabajō* 's or workers of the immense Japanese sex industry, in the rain, to then drag them to their host clubs and make them spend hundreds of thousands of yens in bottles of champagne and French cognac. I'd never seen them before. Don't miss the great documentary "**The Great Happiness Space: Tale of an Osaka Love Thief**" by **Jake Clennel**, which we screened at Ikigai Room (<https://www.ikigairoom.it/event/proiezione-di-the-great-happiness-space-giappone-2006/>).



Host fashion doesn't look like this anymore, unfortunately...

Money and Love: host clubs in Japan.



Host club history.Hostess gal host contin...



I returned to Japan in 2018 and even the way they dress had changed, the faces of the most popular hosts were still on the facades of the clubs while the streets of Shinjuku were literally invaded by foreigners. Back then there was me and a few others, I really felt in a completely alien world and very far from home.

I followed the guide as best I could, but then I had to go back home but I was back in Japan again in 2007/08 and I took back that guide with me, still the same printed copy since smartphones didn't exist yet. I tried to complete the work but the guide kept changing and the task was too difficult. I also contacted schultzzz to talk about music. I knew little about him, I think he maybe taught English as all Westerners are forced to do, but the site contained a lot more, from anthropology essays to his music ([here his Bandcamp page \(https://schultzzz.bandcamp.com/music\)](https://schultzzz.bandcamp.com/music), updated with new music to 2019!), a strange mix of hiphop, comedy music à la Weird Al Yankovic, hardcore punk, spoken in English and Japanese, all strictly lo-fi and for free! Then rantings about politics, description of dreams, interviews, reviews of punk concerts and even (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180729141849/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/category/japan/nihongo/translation/>) actual full professionally done translations of books from Japanese to English (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180729141849/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/category/japan/nihongo/translation/>), such as **Oe Kenzaburo's** masterpiece "**17**" and "**Death of A Political Youth**", then "**Japanese Are Half Fallen**" by **Nakajima Yoshimichi** and the true-crime "**Ura Hello Work**" by **Shinya Kusaka**, at the time, and still today, otherwise untranslated and unpublished in any Western languages, and a great **textbook on the study of the Japanese language**, which has evolved from (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180727095719/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/2009/02/27/hentai-dictionary/>) an exhilarating guide to the hentai language (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180727095719/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/2009/02/27/hentai-dictionary/>) to a real method of learning with (<https://www.kanjidamage.com/>) **Kanji Damage** (<https://www.kanjidamage.com/>), (updated until a couple of years ago, and it also has a (<https://www.facebook.com/kanjidamage/>) **Facebook page** ([https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/kanjidamage/)

[kanjidamage/](#))), for the study of up to **1,700 freaking kanjis** through jokes, word games and other tongue-in-cheek techniques making schultzzz not only an incredible artist and character, but also an excellent **Japanese language sensei**. And it's all **for free**!



His knowledge of Tokyo, the level of access to its darkest and most hidden corners, are unique, there is no other site or resource, 15 years later, that comes even close to what schultzzz has managed to collect in his site: a quantity of meticulous information, research, studies, years and years spent deepening the Japanese language and its most intimate and sometimes embarrassing nuances, the maniacal documentation of a city, or rather of a universe, in some of its most difficult years (post economic bubble バブル景気, post sarin attacks in 1995, post dotcom crash, post-post...), after which Japan has basically closed in on itself and has become extremely self-referential, masturbating in the otaku culture and cradling an image of perfection and digitalization which are far from reality.

All this I must repeat, **pre-social**, **pre-Google Maps** (but below you'll find a **Maps** version of his guide updated to 2014), **pre-Google** in general (I don't remember which search engine I used in 2006, maybe Yahoo, and there were certainly no indexing SEO strategies that could make his site emerge in the ocean that is internet) **pre-Youtube**, pre-clearance of the otaku culture (Toonami arrived on Adult Swim only at the

beginning of 2000, bringing anime to the American public and therefore substantially to the whole world and making it an ultimately worldwide phenomenon and ultimately making me lose any interest in it).

This guide is the result of conversations, friendships, word of mouth, struggles, forums and bulletin boards in indecipherable Japanese, and real wanderlust, joy and desire to travel, aimlessly, discovering the different, the fantastic, the other.

Tokyo Tour Guide hasn't been updated since **2014**, when schultzzz has probably left the country to embark on other adventures. The [_\(<https://web.archive.org/web/20180826220808/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/>\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20180826220808/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/) site, Hello Damage ([_\(<https://web.archive.org/web/20180826220808/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/>\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20180826220808/http://www.hellodamage.com/top/)), remained functional until 2019, updating it with political opinion columns until 2018, well documenting the disaster of the Trump era, but now it sadly is not more, it's invisible, among the millions of dead links the digital tide leaves ashore, but a ghost of it still persists in its archival form thanks to [_\(<https://archive.org/web/>\)](https://archive.org/web/) **Wayback Machine** ([_\(<https://archive.org/web/>\)](https://archive.org/web/)), of **Internet Archive**, a non-profit that archives "dead" sites and web pages providing a picture of how they appeared in various moments in the past, a historiographic source of crucial and uttermost importance. Photos and links hosted on external sites are no longer there, but the core of the site, all its writings, and the guide, are still there.

I didn't return to Japan for another 10 years, until 2018, and I remembered that site which I hadn't visited for a long time, but unfortunately finding it **stuck to 2014**. I retraced some of those streets, alleys, stairs, buildings, interiors, seeing places that had changed names and management numerous times, disappearing completely if not on his blog. Some do survive, like *Animal* アニマル (<http://animal.nobody.jp/>), the now famous **Village Vanguard** not-so-fringy-at-all-anymore bookstore chain, **Radio Kaikan**, **Design Festa Gallery**, and who knows how many others. **Yoyogi Park** obviously nobody will ever move it, but I couldn't find the rockabilly dancers.



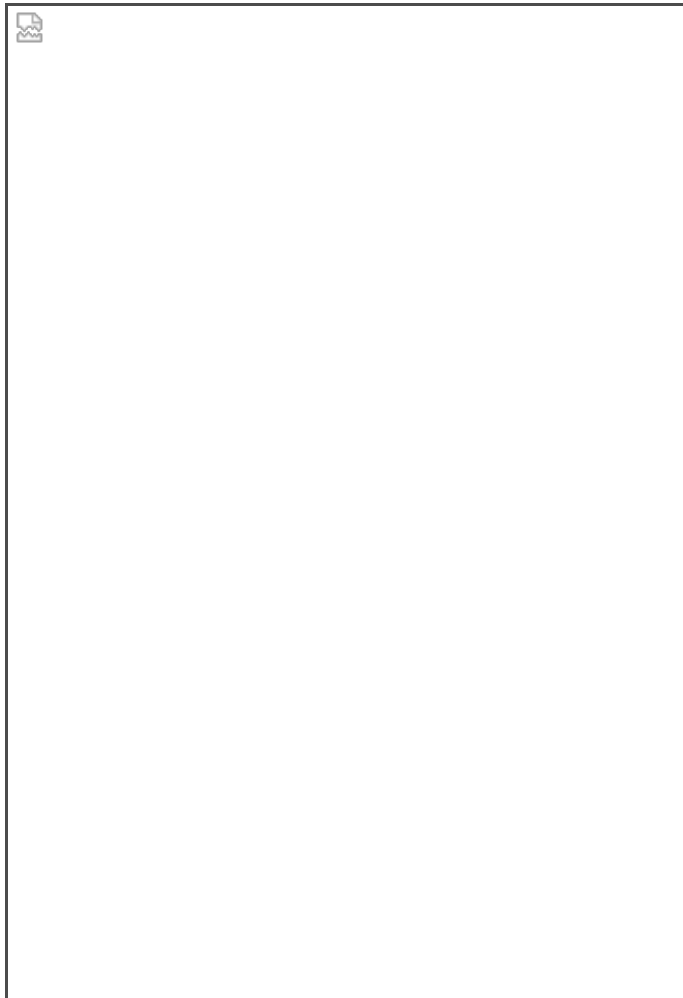
アニマル (Animal) in Koenji, from this [blog](http://kumachan569.blog45.fc2.com/blog-category-17.html) (<http://kumachan569.blog45.fc2.com/blog-category-17.html>) describing, in Japanese unfortunately, all the different niche and quirky stores you can find in Koenji, from vintage American tin toys, Pez bugglegum dispensers and various Americana, to obscure folk records and second hand J-pop and Shibuya kei indie clothes

Juvenile Delinquent, a **boutique** in **Shibuya** specializing in zoot suits (wide men's suits with a very high waist and padded straps popular among American minorities in the 40s, basically the yellow one worn by Jim Carrey in **The Mask**), with pimp sticks, gold chains, gem-littered calices, velvet curtains and an owner completely immersed in **Chicano culture** who raps under the nickname Loco Coyote, unfortunately no longer exists. Obviously I never felt the need to buy a zoot suit in Japan to participate in the annual Chicago Players Ball, but the fact that such a store existed in Japan has always struck me made my heart warm.

Inside Japan's Chicano Subculture | NYT



Japan is (was...) where **subcultures** from all over the world can coexist in the same “other” place and time and yet have almost nothing in common with the tradition from which they are born, ending up being “**Japanized**“, assimilated to such an extent as to become an independent culture, or to be perfected until the land of the rising sun becomes its adopted homeland. I don’t know how Chicano culture came to Japan, perhaps through rap or blackface *gyaru*, yet you can still see *lowriders* roaming the streets in any city, especially Nagoya.



From [\(http://tokyofashion.com/retro-mens-zoot-suit-style-tokyo-juvenile-delinquent/\)](http://tokyofashion.com/retro-mens-zoot-suit-style-tokyo-juvenile-delinquent/) Tokyo Fashion [\(http://tokyofashion.com/retro-mens-zoot-suit-style-tokyo-juvenile-delinquent/\)](http://tokyofashion.com/retro-mens-zoot-suit-style-tokyo-juvenile-delinquent/), a harmless “juvenile delinquent” in the streets of Harajuku

I recommend reading the excellent book by **David Marx** (author of the [Neojaponisme \(http://neojaponisme.com/\)](http://neojaponisme.com/) and [Neomarxisme \(http://neomarxisme.com/\)](http://neomarxisme.com/) blogs from which we have already drawn various news, and now of [\(http://wordshape.com/njp-1/\)](http://wordshape.com/njp-1/) NJP#1: Shōwa Tokyo [\(https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/wdavidmarx/njp-1-showa-tokyo-a-print-magazine-from-neojaponisme\)](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/wdavidmarx/njp-1-showa-tokyo-a-print-magazine-from-neojaponisme)), a collection of writings from the site that retraces a guide to the Tokyo of the Showa era), “**Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style**”, about the adoption by young Japanese people of American fashions and styles from the 50s onwards, and internalizing them to the point of forming new traditions, the “**American Traditional**”, or in *wasei-eigo* “**ametora**”, with brands such as Uniqlo, Evisu and others, and becoming a mecca for lovers of wornout vintage denim jeans and sneakers from all over the world, pursuing these assimilated fashions in the most extreme and faithful form and rigor, but at the same time more syncretic and avant-garde.

TA Talks- David Marx: The Influence of Ja...

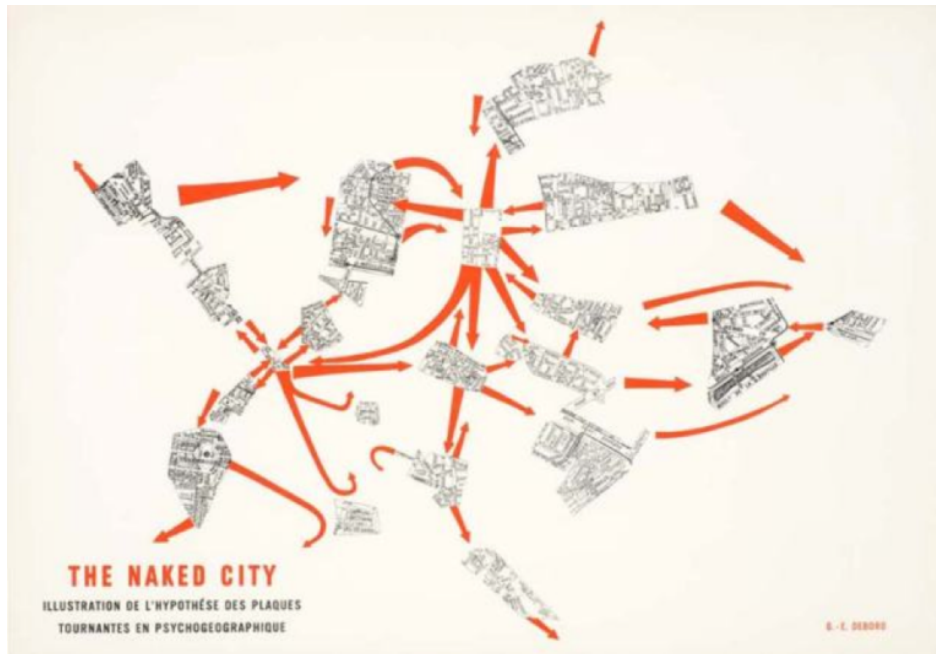


Tokyo Tour Guide is first and foremost a **guide to the humanity of Tokyo**, in its warmest and most curious sense possible. Schultzzz loves the people he meets, no matter how imperfect, grumpy, intolerant, drunk and crazy they are, and he loves them so much that he offers us a very detailed anthropological and **psychogeographical** map that will remain in time, and that will not only allow an audience of readers and foreign travellers to understand **what Tokyo was like in the early 2000s**, but also to myself to remember what I was like in those years and what I wanted to discover and be in that precise place and time that formed my imagination and my self.

That of Tokyo Guide is a **dérive**, a **drift**, and in the words of **Guy Debord**:

"To make a drift, walk aimlessly around. Choose your route as you go, not according to what you know, but according to what you see around you. You must be weirded out and look at everything as if it were the first time. One way to make it easier is to walk with a cadenced pace and slightly upward

looking gaze, so that you bring the architecture into the centre of your field of vision and leave the street level at the lower edge of your view. You have to perceive the space as a unified whole and let yourself be attracted by the details”.



John Zorn & Naked City with Eye - NYC live



Incidentally (I just found out now, thank you Wikipedia), “**Naked City**”, the name of Zorn’s group with **Yamataka Eye** of **Boredoms** that pushed me to look for information about the **club Den Atsu 20,000v**, is originally the name of a *psychogeographic* map by Guy Debord himself, in which he takes 19 sections of Paris and reassembles them in random order, inviting the user of the map to choose his own path through a series of arrows that hold these pieces together, tracing historical and existential paths that go beyond what appears, facades and constructions of the present, offering perspectives that go beyond time and functionality.

I’ll always be grateful to **Steven Schultzzz**, and I’m not the only one, of course. Other friends who have been to Japan, not

by chance attracted by interests related to me such as noise, “forbidden” Cat III films, the filthiest humanity in short, have devoured it as much as I have. There are some posts on Reddit that still talk about it, but as I said the site is no longer there if not in the reflection of what it was, and it belongs to that pre-social network world that time and deliberate choices have removed completely from history, drowning it in the most hidden pages of any search (page 2 of any Google search is enough to deny your very existence). 10 years ago online results now to a (<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/10/raiders-of-the-lost-web/409210/>) new digital Dark Age (<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/10/raiders-of-the-lost-web/409210/>).

Few people remember **blogs** now, thanks to which I discovered a lot of music at the time of Megaupload and Mediafire. Someone is fortunately still alive, like my favourite, Burek’s Flying Teapot (<https://flying-teapot.blogspot.com/>), whom I thank. Only years later I realized that his banner was taken from the manga **Nijigahara Holograph** by **Asano Inio**, which I had read years before in illegal scans, before Panini’s Planet Manga published it in Italy and it became a classic.



“Nijigahara Holograph” di Inio Asano, banner of The Flying Teapot blog (<http://flying-teapot.blogspot.com/>)

Those blogs were places of the mind too, where those behind

the keyboard drew thick maps made of scans and translations of souls, movies, untraceable records, all without copyright in the name of a free culture now completely gone. Finding those same movies which I had seen for the first time at **Asian Feast**'s nocturnal secret night screenings (which I thank again here), or at the first editions of **Future Film Festival**, is now nearly impossible, maybe with some Demonoid torrent created more than ten years ago, but everything else, the outrageous, unorthodox, anarchic, excessive and desperate that brought me closer to Japan, you won't find that on Netflix or Disney Plus, just as you won't find the places drawn by Schultzz on any travel blog, Instagram, nor on Atlas Obscura, nor on Lonely Planet. You'll have to look for them, getting your hands dirty, making mistakes, getting screwed in a cheap snack bar where the old mama san will make you overpay for a beer and two peanuts, being stopped by a Nigerian club hawker in Roppongi or simply missing the last train home.



From schultzz's Bandcamp

For those who may be interested, here are [https://www.amazon.it/s?i=digital-text&rh=p_27%3ASteven+Schultzz&s=relevancerank&text=Steven+Schultzz books by Steven Schultz in ebook format](https://www.amazon.it/s?i=digital-text&rh=p_27%3ASteven+Schultzz&s=relevancerank&text=Steven+Schultzz+books+by+Steven+Schultz+in+ebook+format) https://www.amazon.it/s?i=digital-text&rh=p_27%3ASteven+Schultzz&s=relevancerank&text=Steven+Schultzz and <https://schultzz.bandcamp.com/music> here his music <https://schultzz.bandcamp.com/music>.

I also found Steven in the soundtrack of a beautiful audio guide series, "**Tokyo Realtime**", all for **free on soundcloud**, of <https://soundcloud.com/whiterabbitpress/tokyo-realtime-akihabara> Akihabara <https://soundcloud.com/whiterabbitpress/tokyo-realtime-akihabara> and <https://soundcloud.com/whiterabbitpress/tokyo-realtime-kabukicho-full> Kabukicho <https://soundcloud.com/whiterabbitpress/>

tokyo-realtime-kabukicho-full), edited by **White Rabbit Press**, with contributions by Japan-related-things experts such as **Patrick Macias**. These too belong to the past unfortunately (2012 I think), but they are really cheap and will lead you through the crowded streets of these two districts so beaten but with so much to offer to those who really want to discover something new.

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